

Beyond the Expected

Creating and sustaining relationships for your institutions

By Claire M. Germain

their value to their parent organizations. They have created and now sustain relationships for their institutions—law schools, law firms, government entities, and other organizations—because they have the common good of the institution in mind and are there to stay. The purpose of this article is to inform, inspire, celebrate, and provide concrete examples for other libraries to follow. Library initiatives can lead to benefits for the institution that are larger than the library itself. They also reinforce the value of the library and especially its librarians.

In the fall of 2009, I queried law librarians on various online discussion lists and asked them to provide examples of what they had done for their institutions beyond the expected. The numerous examples below are gratifying and exemplary—and hopefully will encourage other librarians to find ways to help move their institutions “outside the box” of normal activities.

Partnerships Outside of the Institution

Willamette College of Law Library is part of a consortium/partnership between academic and judicial/executive/

legislative users. As one of the four libraries that form The Hatfield Library Consortium, it provides academic and Oregon state executive, judicial, and legislative

initiatives formed to engage in public policy research and law reform in Oregon. The Hatfield Library Consortium seeks to build mutually beneficial ties between Oregon state government and the Willamette University community. (For more information, visit <http://library.willamette.edu/hlc>.)

Suffolk Law Library has been involved in archiving the webcasts of oral arguments before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Librarians have participated in the planning, management, and administration of the program from the beginning, working with deans at the law school, justices at the court, and administrators from across the university and the court system in setting up the process to live-webcast the arguments, tag them with keywords for searching, add abstracts, and archive them for viewing.

Several years ago, St. Louis University Law Library worked with a local magnet high school to build and organize a library for its use in learning basic civics and street law, using donations as well as duplicates and discards from the law library to help build the collection.

New York University Law Library manages Starr Foundation grant projects started under the leadership of Kathie Price and now administered by Radu Popa. They have created an international network of law librarians with a special focus on emerging countries.

Cornell Law Library shipped duplicate American law books to the

French Supreme Court (*Cour de cassation*) and offered ongoing reference services for the court. This created an institutional relationship that led to multiple opportunities for the law school, including a formal dedication and plaque in that library honoring Cornell Law School, as well as the creation of the Cornell Law Clerk Program (at the Constitutional Council in 2008 and at the *Conseil d'Etat* in 2009). The relationship also further strengthened the already existing faculty and student exchanges.

The Cornell Law Library also shipped other American law duplicate books to the library of the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, which led to a partnership with that school. As a result, I had the opportunity to teach a course on U.S.

legal research, the library hosted a conference in Paris, and an ENS professor came to Cornell to give a lecture.

All the academic law libraries in Florida co-fund the digitization of the Florida Supreme Court records and briefs. Faye Jones, director and professor of law at Florida State University (FSU), states that this benefits her school as the host because that collection of records and briefs is the most heavily used part of the school's website. Thanks to FSU's proximity to the court and its excellent working relationship with court staff, there is no other entity that could have created and maintained this for the common good.

Librarians write and speak to outside groups and publications, participate in state and local bar association activities, chair bar committees, speak at CLE programs, and write for bar publications. A group of academic, law firm, and government librarians worked with the Virginia State Bar on the committee to select and subsequently renew an online legal research system for members of the bar.

The AALL Publishing Initiatives Caucus (www.aallnet.org/caucus/pic/index.htm) has helped librarians with ideas and contacts to spread the word of librarians' expertise. The caucus encourages members to write articles for legal journals and publications, which helps to create a higher profile for law librarians in their communities.

In Wisconsin, for instance, law librarians regularly publish in the *Wisconsin Lawyer*, and a law firm librarian has a regular column in the state bar association's *Inside Track* newsletter.

A number of other chapters work with their local bar associations in the same manner. The law librarians in Wisconsin coordinated with the State Bar of Wisconsin and did several training courses, called "Internet Bootcamps," that were held at the state bar headquarters. They also offer presentations on a variety of topics at the state bar conventions.

Three Cornell librarians were invited by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), in Arusha, Tanzania, as United Nations consultants to provide advice on handling the tribunal's archival materials. The request originated with a phone call received from the ICTR—a Google search revealed that Cornell Law Library had a Nuremberg collection, and the tribunal felt it might benefit from the library's experience. The consultation turned into an advocacy effort urging the judges to organize, preserve, and donate their papers to sustain the legacy of the genocide trials. It also led to the judges and prosecutors being invited to Cornell to speak to law students and alumni. What started as a library initiative became a beneficial relationship for the entire law school and university.

Librarians who write blogs have a positive effect on their institution in the form of additional exposure and

outreach to students, lawyers, and librarians who comment on the blogs. Some libraries host websites for organizations, e.g., Cornell Law Library hosts the website for the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL). Other librarians use their professional library association connections to secure speakers for AALL and other associations—in one instance, speakers included a librarian's managing partner, a paralegal, and a client.

Librarians have a special ability to bring people together. Because of her interest in legal history, Georgia D. Chadwick, director of the Law Library of Louisiana, encouraged the publication of a new edition of *Jefferson's Louisiana* by Professor George Dargo. She organized an event in the Rex Room of Antoine's Restaurant during the American Association of Law Schools meeting in New Orleans, bringing professors, archivists, librarians, and the publisher Lawbook Exchange together to celebrate its publication.

Partnerships within Institutions

The University of South Carolina Law Library has created a law school archive that contains records of the public life of the law school. One of the largest users has been the school development office seeking information on alumni from when they were students.

Several librarians have taken a larger role in development work, including library tours, alumni reunions, and other activities. Ruth Bird, law librarian at Oxford University's Bodleian Law Library, has worked closely with the law faculty in wooing law firms to fund and support library initiatives. She is a member of the Law Faculty Development Council, which is made up of managing partners of leading global firms and several judges, as well as two law lords and several barristers. She has obtained ongoing funding for law library initiatives totaling a substantial sum of money per year.

In our global environment, the library can play a crucial role in guiding the research experience of international students and faculty for the benefit of the international reputation of the law school. Blair Kauffman, director of the law library and professor of law at Yale Law School, had lunch with one

of the school's visiting law professors from Europe who told him that he and most of his European colleagues were attracted to U.S. universities and law schools primarily for access to their libraries—all else was incidental. In other words, while they can talk with their American colleagues at conferences and elsewhere, the ability to do extended research in our rich libraries is the strongest draw for their visits.



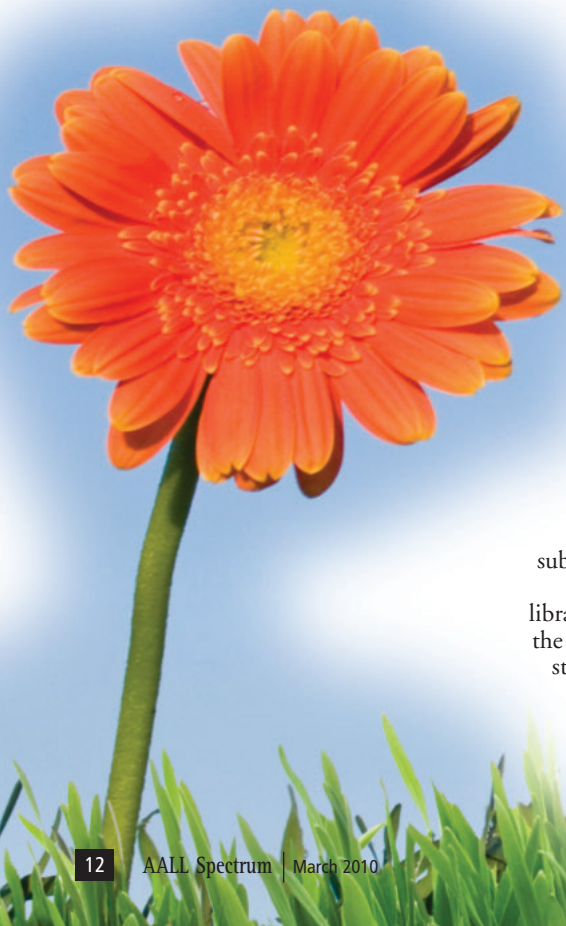
Three Cornell law librarians worked as United Nations consultants to provide advice on archival materials to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The result was a mutually beneficial relationship between the law school and the tribunal. Pictured above from left to right: Ayodeji Fadugba, chief information and evidence support section, ICTR; Thomas Mills, head of collections/lecturer in law; Stuart Basefsky, information specialist, Industrial and Labor Relations School; Sir Dennis Byron, President, ICTR; and Claire Germain, Edward Cornell law librarian and professor of law.

Involvement in Other Departments

Librarians stretch themselves to make the institution look good. They sustain the organization's ability to be effective. Both law firm and academic librarians write that they increase their value to their organizations by helping on projects and activities outside the traditional library. The following activities show some parallel between academic and law firm librarians, who might benefit from learning more from one another's practices. Law firm librarians are integrated into the practice teams, an idea that might encourage academic librarians to integrate more fully into the law school's institutes and centers.

Law Firms

Assistance to the firm beyond the library includes integration into the practice teams. Library staff are assigned to specific practice groups, attend their meetings, and provide them with the



information they need in a proactive rather than reactive manner. On a number of occasions, the special skills that are part of a librarian's job skill set—e.g., organizational skills, personnel management experience, and technology skills—translate to different departments of their organization, broaden their horizons, and enrich their work experience, engagement, and value to the firm.

For example, one law firm librarian has coordinated a number of data conversions following the first successful major conversion in his library, which gives him more visibility in his law firm. Another has made himself indispensable in becoming the “go to” person for anything having to do with delivering value-added information through the firm's Microsoft SharePoint platform and has developed a variety of applications, including internal corporate forms, precedent databases, wikis, blogs, and team sites, effectively growing a knowledge management capability from the ground up.

Several librarians are at the forefront of business development/competitive intelligence within their law firms, even when there may be a marketing department, and they do research for their organizations beyond the expected. They provide briefing information and analysis on prospective clients, industry and competitor information and analysis for the firm's executives, confidential research/setting up information systems for the firm, corporate and litigation profiles, industry news monitoring, and delivery of “filtered by librarians” news directly to the lawyers.

“We developed a ‘Litigation Watch Initiative’ in which we are using a text search utility to scan dozens of html newsletters for any hit on our top 250 clients, mostly as a client relationship tool,” says John Harbison, director of library and information management at Covington & Burling LLP in Washington, D.C. Librarians provide help to law firm management in supporting strategic growth initiatives and lateral hiring.

Personnel management is another area that can translate into increasing value to the organization. One librarian demonstrated that he could handle difficult personnel situations. As a result, he took over management of the docketing department and additional projects to solve personnel/morale problems within the firm.

The reliability and presence of the librarian as a major administrator comes into play in different ways, including emergencies. One librarian was working in the office on a Sunday afternoon when a partner mentioned that there

was water on the floor. The librarian instantly realized that this was a major water leak and coordinated the immediate cleanup. As a result, he is always consulted when there is an emergency, even if he is not on the premises. Sandra J. Proctor, librarian at Morris James LLP, chairs the firm's Business Continuity Program Committee, coordinates the firm's emergency procedures, and organizes training for safety coordinators and medical responders.

Pro bono and volunteer activities reflect well on the law firm or school, as several librarians report:

“We are very committed to our community—we volunteer throughout the year in various organizations. I sign up for most of these events. I also started a Volunteer Law Librarians of New England group two years ago.”

Do you have your own success story to share? Author Claire Germain is seeking more examples of ways librarians have created valuable relationships for their institutions. Please e-mail your stories to her at cmg13@cornell.edu. Then be sure to visit <http://library2.lawschool.cornell.edu/aal> to read more about connections your colleagues have made.

“My firm management puts a high value on volunteerism, and they appreciate my efforts to keep our firm on the forefront of these activities.”

Some law librarians are even members of their firm's spelling bee teams, which raise money for charity.

Some librarians manage departments beyond the library—for instance, knowledge management. In one example, the library staff maintains and supports more than 33 practice group virtual communities on their portal as well as the firm's intranet.

As one law firm librarian writes, “Wherever I have worked, I have always tried to help with the administration of projects outside the traditional library. This has led to my current position as director of information resources management, which currently includes conflicts, docketing, and the library.”

Law Schools

Some law librarians fulfill roles within their law schools beyond the library, often as a function of their faculty status. For instance, a few direct their law school's international programs. A

number of law librarians have directed summer programs abroad or the first-year lawyering skills program. And several teach credit courses in legal research and substantive law courses.

Some fulfill functions beyond the library, such as running the information technology department for the law school. Others team teach in the first-year legal research and writing program. And still others have honored the profession by reaching the apex of the law school hierarchy by becoming interim or permanent law school deans.

Several law libraries are involved in support of centers and institutes, as well as law school administrative and staff offices. Librarians chair search committees for top administrators in their law schools or law firms. In these instances, the organizational skills of librarians are tapped for the common good of the institution, especially when they volunteer to take on the additional responsibilities that others might not. It pays off in excellent relations between the library and other important offices.

Librarians also chair committees for their law schools or firms, e.g., the building committee, website redesign, or the American Bar Association (ABA) Self Study Committee. Several mention that they have served in their university faculty senate or campus committees, a service that benefits both the law library and the law school, and others have served on committees of national groups, such as the ABA or AALS.

Some develop and host conferences, and their individual librarians' initiatives and projects have led to large benefits for their institution and for the profession. Janis Johnston, director of the law library and associate professor of law at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and Frank Y. Liu, director of the law library and professor of law at the Duquesne University Center for Legal Information, co-chaired the first-ever AALL conference in China on legal information and law libraries that built relationships with more than 30 law schools in China.

Carl Yirka, professor and library director at Vermont Law School in South Royalton, has been project director for seven years for two U.S. State Department grants funding law school work with a Russian law faculty. Other activities bring the law school community together, such as celebrating books published by faculty, sponsoring a book talk series in a local bookstore, or hosting a film series.

Your Turn

You may wonder what constitutes “beyond normal activities”? It could be that the activities mentioned here are

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part and parcel of what law librarians can offer to their institutions, depending on the culture, needs, and inclinations. Some of these activities may become part of the “normal activities,” but if they have positive outcomes for the institution and the librarian, the result is a win-win situation.

These examples show what good outcomes are possible for institutions when librarians are proactive in stretching beyond their original job descriptions. Hopefully they will inspire you to seize opportunities to use your special talents for the benefit of your organization, whether it is your organizational skills, experience in personnel management, foreign language abilities, or technology skills. You may start by familiarizing yourself with the big picture of your organization and reflect on how you fit in and what you can contribute beyond the expected. Yes, you have to stretch yourself, but that is what makes life interesting. Each library has something special and unique—a treasure trove in the form

of a collection or a service—that can be exploited in a good way.

The benefits of these activities are numerous. They reflect well on the institution and draw positive attention, making your library a value center, not a cost center. They are personally and professionally rewarding. The secret of success in the organization is the integration into its operations. The library can create opportunities for others in the institution—or initiatives may have originated with faculty or administrators, or even former deans or judges who are no longer interested in the projects they started. All that matters now is that the initiative is sustained by the library, and at the end of the day, libraries and librarians are all about creating and sustaining relationships. ■

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